# Language Technology, Electronic Health Records, and the Clinical Narrative

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Electronic health records are a big deal.

"The Electronic Health Record (EHR) is a longitudinal electronic record of patient health information generated by one or more encounters in any care delivery setting. Included in this information are patient demographics, progress notes, problems, medications, vital signs, past medical history, immunizations, laboratory data, and radiology reports...."

In the United States there are on the order of 2,000,000,000 doctor-patient encounters per year; that's over 200,000 an hour.

On April 26, 2004, President Bush announced the goal of assuring that most Americans have EHRs within the next 10 years, i.e. in 2014.

http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1550638/

The Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act was passed in 2009. It authorizes expenditures of at least \$20,000,000,000 to promote the adoption and use of EHR technologies.

http://itlaw.wikia.com/wiki/HITECH\_Act

- Which decision is supported by the best evidence?
- How well does a proposed treatment work?
- Does drug effectiveness vary by patient population?
- Who are the good candidates for a clinical trial?
- Which caregivers are following best practices?
- Are more cost-effective options being overlooked?
- Are we seeing evidence of a new epidemic?
- Are we seeing evidence of a biological attack??
- Are we seeing evidence of an alien invasion???
   Ok, maybe not that.

Those applications all require patient data that is suitable for analytics.

The obvious solution is to have healthcare providers enter patient data that is suitable for analytics.

### **Providers**

# Payers



CHIEF COMPLAINT: Shortness of breath. HPI: This is a 68-year-old female who presents to the emergency department with shortness of breath going for several days ...







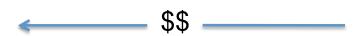
# Providers

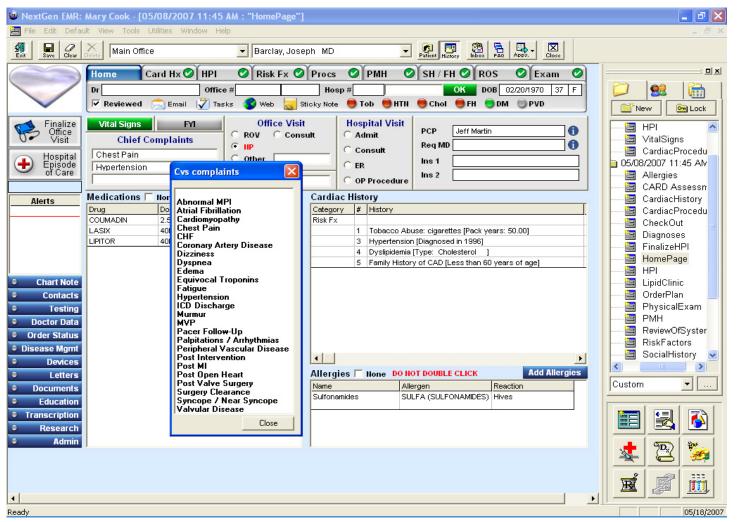
# **Payers**











Source: http://www.nextgen.com/images/screenshots/card01.jpg

"This system is designed for physicians to point and click their way through an entire exam quickly and effortlessly." (EMR product review)

1 Tablet(s) PO Daily

1 tab by mouth or orally daily

1 tab orally every 24 hours.

1 tab(s) PO (oral) qDay

1 tab(s) orally once a day.

1 tabs QD

1.0 tab po qd

ONE TABLET; ORAL QD

One orally daily

One tablet po daily

TAKE 1 TABLET DAILY

TAKE ONE PO QD

Take 1 Tab by mouth daily.

Take 1 tab daily daily orally

Take 1 tab daily orally

Take 1 tab po qday

Take 1 tab qd po

Take 1 tab qday PO

Take 1 tab(s) daily orally

Take 1 tablet by mouth daily.

Take 1 tablet orally Daily

Take 1 tablet orally every day

Take one orally daily

Take one orally daily as discussede

Take one tablet by mouth daily

Take one tablet by mouth every day

Take one tablet daily

Take one tablet once per day orally

Take one tablet po qd

by mouth one po qd

one orally once a day

one orally per day

one tablet by mouth daily

one tablet daily

one tablet once a day

take 1 tab po daily

take 1 tab po qd

take one orally each day

### But...

The path we are taking to EHRs threatens to disrupt or even do away with the natural use of language in clinical records.

And the language in clinical records is also a big deal.

### The clinical narrative

"...In years past, a well-written history and physical, or progress note, would unfold like a story, giving a vivid description of the patient's symptoms and physical exam at the point of the encounter, as well as the synthesis of the data and the plan of care."

 "EMRs: Finding a balance between billing efficiency and patient care", Henry F. Smith, Jr., MD, Commentary, The Times Leader, Wilkes-Barre, PA, June 12, 2011.

### **April 14, 2007**

CHIEF COMPLAINT: Shortness of breath.

HISTORY OF PRESENT ILLNESS: This 68-year-old female presents to the emergency department with shortness of breath that has gone on for 4-5 days, progressively getting worse. It comes on with any kind of activity whatsoever. She has had a nonproductive cough. She has not had any chest pain. She has had chills but no fever.

EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT COURSE: The patient was admitted. She has had intermittent episodes of severe dyspnea. Lungs were clear. These would mildly respond to breathing treatments and morphine. Her D-dimer was positive. We cannot scan her chest; therefore, a nuclear V/Q scan has been ordered. However, after consultation with Dr. C, it is felt that she is potentially too unstable to go for this. Given the positive D-dimer and her severe dyspnea, we have waved the risks and benefits of anticoagulation with her heme-positive stools. She states that she has been constipated lately and doing a lot of straining. Given the possibility of a PE, it was felt like anticoagulation was very important at this time period; therefore, she was anticoagulated. The patient will be admitted to the hospital under Dr. C.

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### May 3, 2007

EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT COURSE: The patient was admitted and nontoxic in appearance. Blood pressure was brought down aggressively. With this combined with BiPAP, she has reversed her respiratory distress promptly. She has improved significantly. She will not require intubation at this time period. Her family has elected to go back to M, Dr. W. I did discuss this case with Dr. G who is on call for L Cardiology. She has accepted him in transfer; however, there are no PCU or ICU beds at this time period. Will admit here for a brief period until a bed is available at M. I discussed this case with Dr. R who will admit.

Clinicians were trying to determine whether the shortness of breath was due exclusively to her failing heart, or whether she has pneumonia.

Prompt response indicates that pneumonia is not the issue.

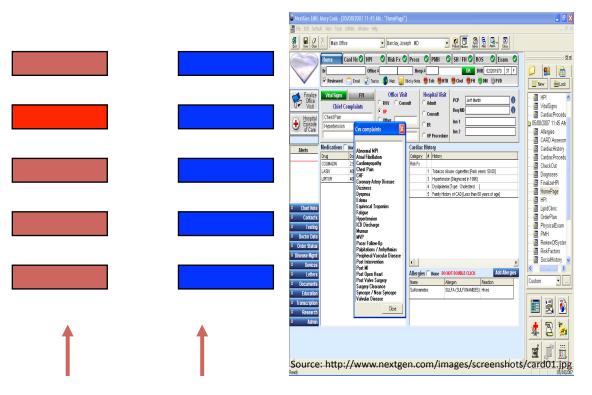
# I worry that EMRs as implemented can actually downgrade the quality of information passed between health care teams

 Henry F. Smith, Jr., MD, "EMRs: Finding a balance between billing efficiency and patient care", Commentary, The Times Leader, Wilkes-Barre, PA, June 12, 2011.

# Previous EMR studies neglect the narrative

- Adoption
- Cost
- Economic value
- Quality of care metrics
- No previous study directly compares clinical communication using free dictations with clinical communication using EMRs.

Mr. John Roe was seen in our office today in follow up of his paroxysmal atrial fibrillation. As you know, he is a 57 year old gentleman who had electrical cardioversion in May 2002 and had been maintained on Betapace since that time. His last visit in our office was July 23, 2003. He recently called our office in February stating he was back in atrial fibrillation which was documented on electrocardiogram. I elected to increase his Betapace to 160 mg twice a day and he did convert back to normal sinus rhythm. We had recommended Coumadin to him at that time but he did not start any Coumadin. He has done well since with no recurrence of arrhythmia and he is acutely aware of when he goes into the fibrillation. He denies any shortness of breath, chest discomfort of congestive heart failure symptoms and has otherwise felt quite well. His only medication is the Lexa pro 10 mg a day as an antidepressant and the Betapace. His review of systems is otherwise unchanged and negative.

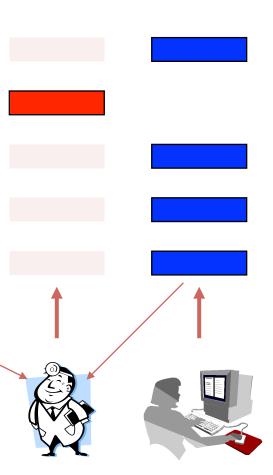


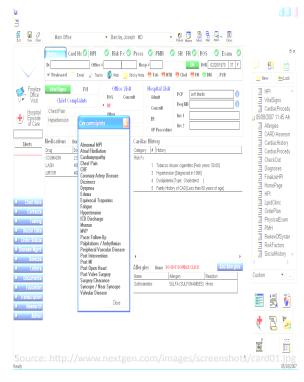
Clinically relevant Clinically relevant information in information in dictation structured entry

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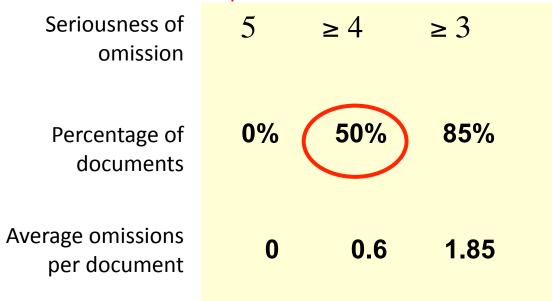
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### **Both experts**

Considered an omission only if *both* experts identified it as an omission

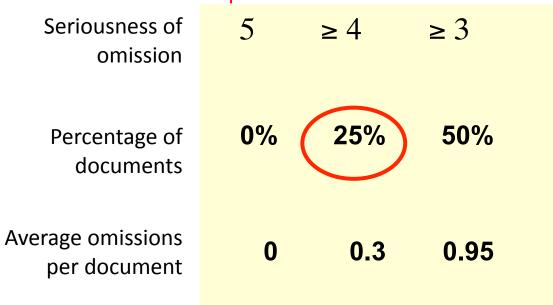


- Some omissions seem straightforward to remediate with easy changes to the EMR specification, e.g.
  - Negative patient reports ("denies SOB")
  - Degrees for symptoms ("mild/severe pain")
  - Reactions to allergies ("rash/hives")

## Results, disregarding "remediable" omissions

### **Both experts**

Considered an omission only if both experts identified it as an omission



 Other omissions seem difficult to remediate, even in principle

### Nuanced/detailed elaborations

- "almost brought to tears just in getting her up on the examination table"
- "able to walk on flat levels and walk at a moderate pace for one hour without abnormal shortness of breath or chest pain"

 Other omissions seem difficult to remediate, even in principle

### Temporal/logical context

- ventricular tachycardia occurred "during post myocardial infarction care...far removed from the time of [patient's] infarction"
- the dictating physician was "hesitant to recommend [patient's] FAA certification renewal" without a repeat of a previous catheterization

- Other omissions seem difficult to remediate, even in principle
  - Dictating physician's thought process
    - recommends continuing Toprol because it "seems to be controlling [the patient's] palpitations well"
    - considers discomfort to be "suggestive of angina"
    - believes that results of stress testing "would rule out significant major coronary artery disease, despite it being a somewhat incomplete study"

# Difficult to remediate: the things that make the clinical narrative a *narrative*

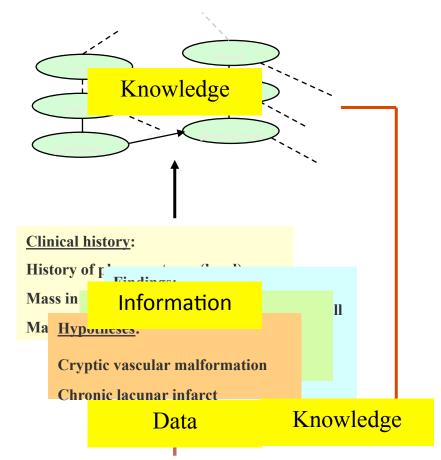
"...As EMRs proliferate, and increased Medicare scrutiny looms, medical documentation is evolving from its original goal of recording what actually was going on with a patient, and what the provider was actually thinking, to sterile boilerplate documents designed to justify the highest billing codes.

"EMRs: Finding a balance between billing efficiency and patient care", Henry F.
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If you lose the language, you lose the story.

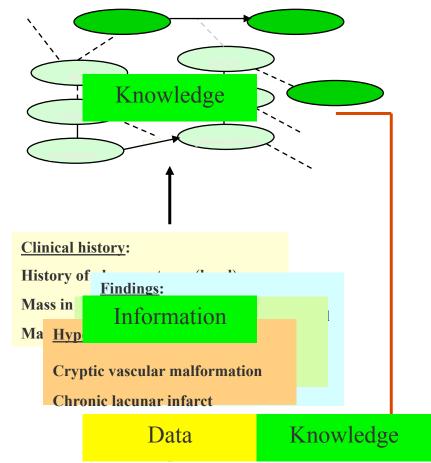
There's another reason the language of the clinical narrative is a big deal.

- The process of knowledge discovery is a natural cycle
- At every iteration, information emerges from data by structuring and categorizing the data according to what we know now



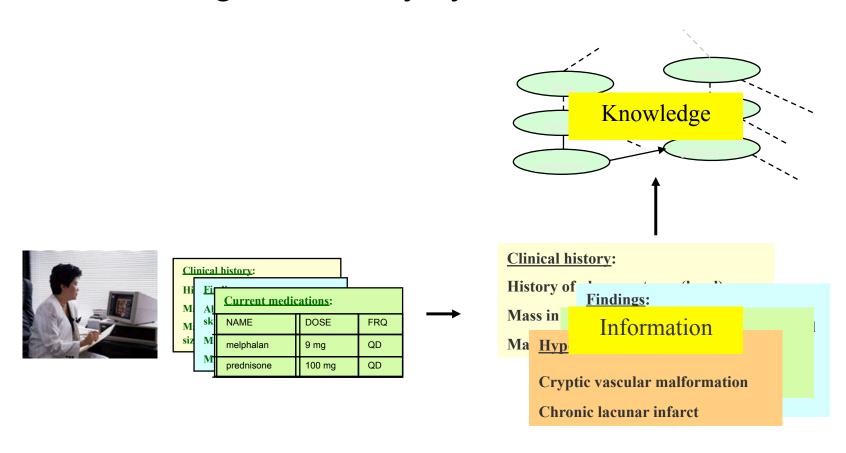
ORDER EXAM: MRI Hd wo&w ORDER IND: head - h/o plasmacytoma^ MR head, without and with IV gadolinium. Comparison is made with previous outside MR head examinations 5/3/04 and 11/16/04. On the earliest outside examination, there was a mass in the right central skull base, extending infratemporal fossa, sphenoidsinus, and foramen ovale. This subsequently was demonstrated to represent a plasm I in size on the subsequent outside MR. Our e I signal and peripheral enhancement, in g right clivus, right sphenoid, and base or right prerygold. This is probably stable when compared with 11/16/04, but is considerably smaller than 5/3/04. The infratemporal soft tissue component of the lesion has resolved. No new or progressing bone lesion. Incidental note is made of a small amount of hemosiderin deposition within the cortex of the left parietal operculum without abnormal enhancement. This could represent cryptic vascular malformation, or chronic lacunar infarct. Mild cerebral leukoaraiosis. ...

- The process of knowledge discovery is a natural cycle
- At every iteration, information emerges from data by structuring and categorizing the data according to what we know now
- As we improve our knowledge, those structures and categories change

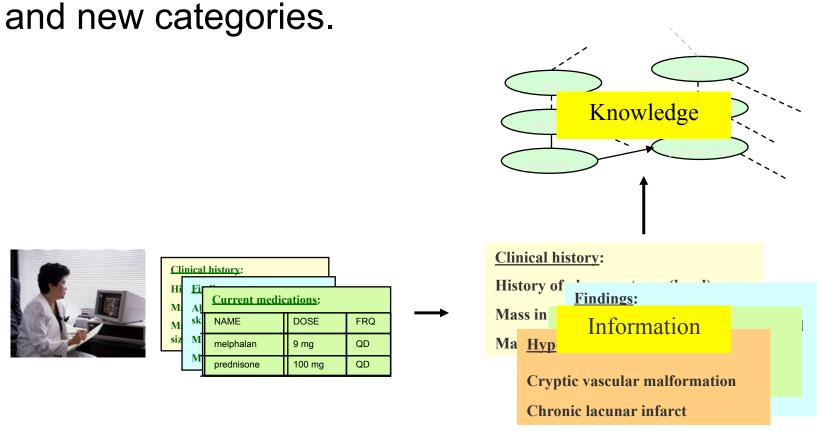


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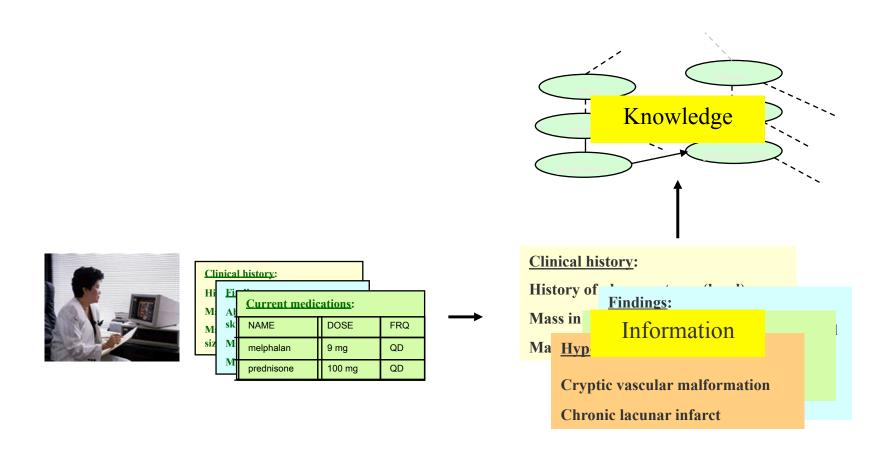
If the full clinical narrative never comes into existence, the knowledge discovery cycle is broken.



Without the original <u>data</u>, we can never reanalyze physicians' observations in the light of new knowledge



### Knowledge structures evolve slowly.



Example: ground glass opacity

Usage Period: term emerged with the introduction of 64-slice CT scans around 1991.

**Definition**: a hazy increase in lung attenuation through which pulmonary vessels may still be seen.

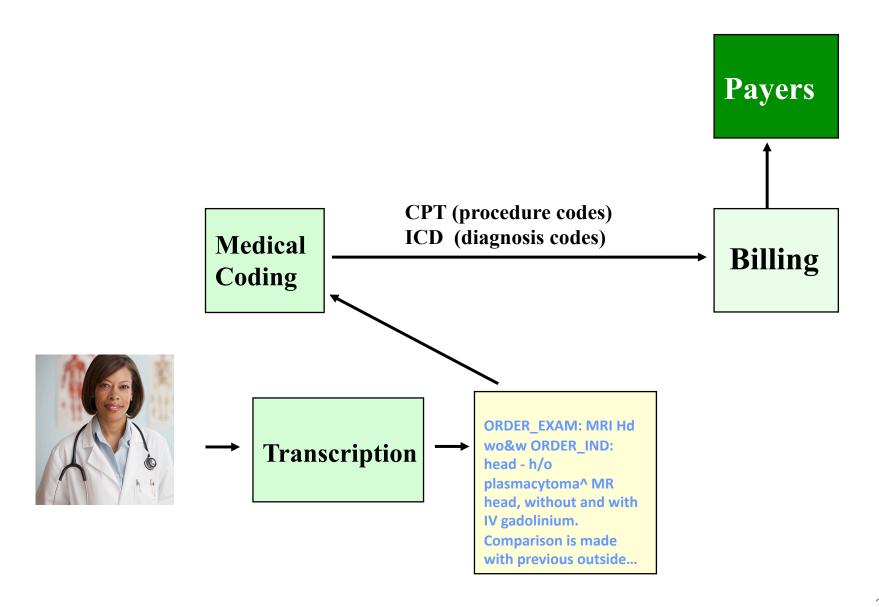
Clinical relevance: evidence that these are a much more probable indication of lung cancer than fully solid or fully non-solid nodules.

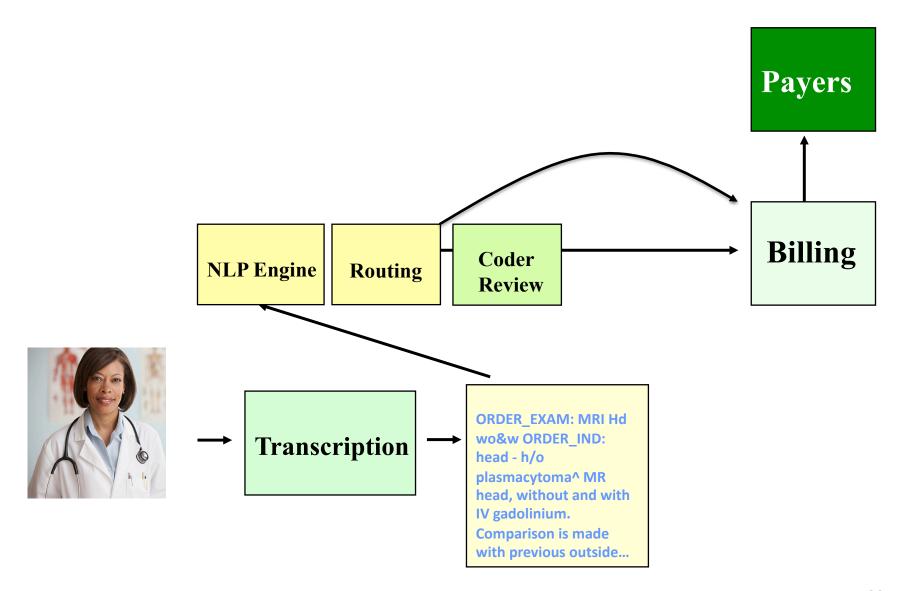
Appearance in standardized nomenclatures: MedDRA, in 2001.

# A dilemma

- The future of healthcare depends on structured information we can aggregate and analyze.
- EMRs are widely viewed as the way to get there.
- But typical EMRs threaten to
  - eliminate or fragment crucial language in the record
  - omit information that clinicians need in order to communicate effectively
  - destroy the knowledge discovery cycle

Natural language processing (NLP) technology offers a way out of the dilemma.





HPI: Atrial fibrillation. This patient is a 56-year-old white gentleman who has had a history of atrial fib on and off since he had his bypass surgery. Patient was originally diagnosed with coronary artery disease as well as mitral valve problems approximately 3 years ago. Dr. used to take care of him at that time. He had a bypass surgery as well as mitral valve repair done at that time. Postop he had an episode of A-fib which then resolved spontaneously. He remembers somebody talking to him about cardioversion, but then the A-fib resolved spontaneously. So he was started on Coumadin. He would get some occasional episodes, but usually they are very brief, so he never bothered about them. Of late, over the last few months, he has been getting more frequent episodes and duration of these episodes is also prolonged for a few hours. So he saw Dr. who has referred him here for further evaluation and treatment. The patient states when he does get the A-fib, he feels very weak, tired, and short of breath. He denies any chest pain. Otherwise he is usually very active physically, he works fulltime as an electrician, and has not had any problems as far as doing his day-to-day work.

**MEDICAL HISTORY:** 1. Coronary artery disease as mentioned above. 2. Hypertension. 3. Hypercholesterolemia.

PAST SURGICAL HISTORY: Significant for hernia repair and appendectomy.

ALLERGIES: Morphine. MEDICATIONS: Toprol-XL 100 daily. Vytorin 10/40 one tablet daily. Coumadin as directed.

SOCIAL HISTORY: Smokes occasionally. Drinks alcohol very occasionally. Married, has 2 children.

**FAMILY HISTORY:** Father died from an MI. Mother died from lung cancer. One brother alive. He has had a history of a lung mass resected which was noncancerous. Another brother is alive and healthy.

ROS: Otherwise unremarkable. EXAM: GENERAL: He is alert and comfortable.

VITAL SIGNS: PULSE RATE: 72 and regular. BLOOD PRESSURE: 112/76. WEIGHT: 198 pounds.

**HEENT:** Pupils equal, reacting to light normally. Examination of the oral cavity is normal.

**NECK:** Good carotid upstroke bilaterally. No JVD.

**CARDIAC:** First and second sounds heard. Regular rate and rhythm. No gallops or murmurs.

**LUNGS:** Clear to auscultate.

**ABDOMEN:** Soft, nontender. No organomegaly.

**DATA:** Lab tests that are available reveal INR is therapeutic at 2.2. Chemistries are overall within the normal range. HDL cholesterol, however, is low at 34. LDL is 70.

**IMPRESSION:** Paroxysmal atrial fibrillation in a patient with prior mitral valve disease, currently having more frequent breakthroughs symptoms.

**PLAN:** I had a long discussion with the patient about the different treatment options including taking medications versus going for an ablation procedure. I did talk to him about the side effects of the antiarrhythmic drugs. Patient is somewhat leery of going on stronger medications. He wants to wait and see for awhile and if his symptomatology gets really bad, then he would be willing to consider more powerful medications. I do agree with him on that. Patient has not had any workup or any kind of a screening since he had his bypass surgery. So we will schedule him for exercise stress echo in the near future. With that information, if he does decide to go on antiarrhythmic drugs, then we can comfortably use class 1A or class 1C agents. Thank you for the consultation. We will keep you informed of the patient's progress.

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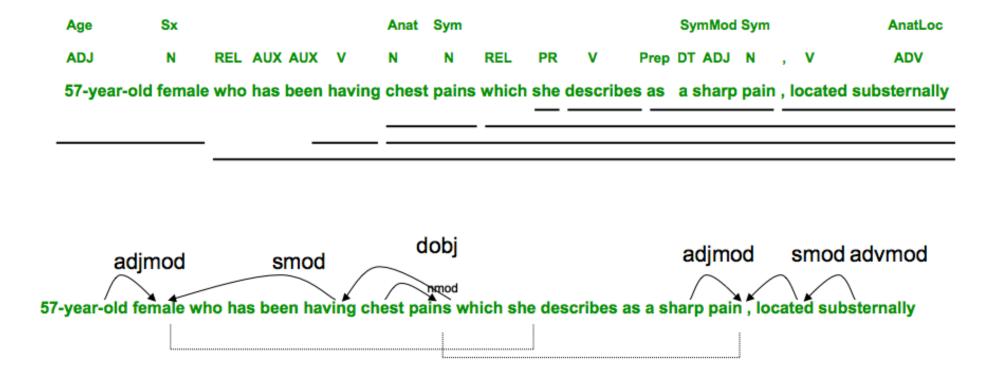
# Morphological analysis

Mrs. Roe is a 57-year-old female who has been having chest pains which she describes as a sharp pain, located substernally occurring at night when she tries to lie on her right side.

= pain + PLURAL In this context, pains is the same as pain.

Sometimes singular vs. plural matters, e.g. *cyst* is different from *cysts*.

## Approaches to identifying/combining information units



## delimit identify normalize extract predict apply\_logic

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**IMPRESSION:** Paroxysmal atrial fibrillation in a patient with prior mitral valve disease, currently having more frequent breakthroughs symptoms.

Туре	Anatomy	Modifier	Diagnosis/Problem
-	atrial	-	fibrillation
history	atrial	-	fibrillation
-	mitral_valve	-	problem
-	-	-	weak
-	-	-	tired
-	-	-	short_of_breath
history	coronary_artery	-	disease
history	-	-	hypertension
-	-	-	hypercholesterolemia
_	atrial	paroxysmal	fibrillation
history	mitral_valve	-	disease

### delimit identify normalize extract predict apply\_logic

		Type	Anatomy	Modifier	Diagnosis/Problem
history of atrial fib on and off since he had his byp427 r31		-	atrial	-	fibrillation
diagnosed with coronary artery disease as well as mitral valve 3 years ago. Dr. used to take care of him a 427 n 31 as well as mitral valve repair done at that time. Postop he had	Rules	history	atrial	-	fibrillation
which then resolved spontaneously. He remembers somebod	y talking to him about	-	mitral_valve	-	problem
cardioversion, but then the A-fib resolved spontaneously. So I Coumadin. He would get some occasional episode 80 to the never 127er3 labout them. Of late, over the last 80 to the never 127er3 labout them.	Rules	-	-	-	weak
hours. So 394 y 9: Logic le episodes is a s	Rules	-	-	-	tired
treatment. The patient states when he does get the A-fib, he f short of breath. He denies any chest pain. Otherw 86 is 05 physically, he works fulltime as an electrician, and has not have	Rules	-	-	-	short_of_breath
doing his day-to-day work. 414.01	Rules	history	coronary_artery	-	disease
MEDICAL HISTORY: 1. Coronary artery disease as 401 of	Rules	history	-	-	hypertension
Hypertension. 3. Hypercholesterolemia. 272.0		-	-	-	hypercholesterolemia
IMPRESSION: Paroxysmal atrial fibrillation in a paint of currently having more frequent breakthroughs symptoms.	Statistics	-	atrial	paroxysmal	fibrillation
394.9	Statistics	history	mitral_valve	-	disease



#### HPI:

The patient presents with headache and pt here with head injury-- jumped and hit head on beam. + LOC. no neck pain. no numbness, visual changes. no vomiting. bleeding controlled at this time. no other injuries. . The course/duration of symptoms is constant. Location: occipital. Radiating pain: none. The character of symptoms is throbbing. Associated symptoms: none.

#### MEDICAL HISTORY:

Medical history Negative. Surgical history: Negative.

#### SOCIAL HISTORY:

Social history: Alcohol use: Denies, Tobacco use: Denies, Drug use: Denies.

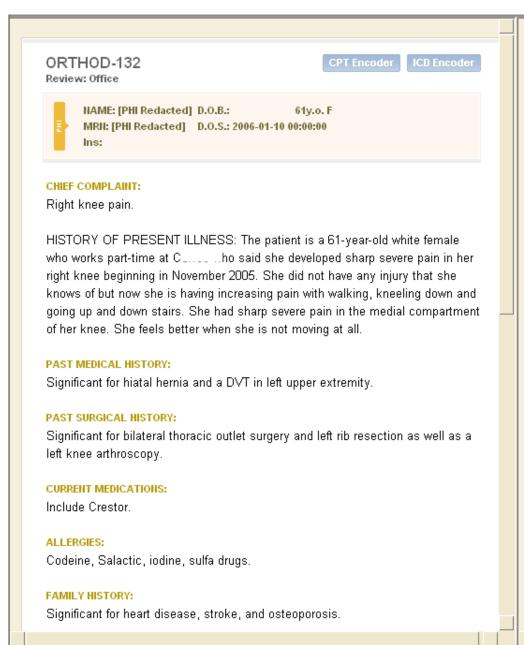
#### ROS:

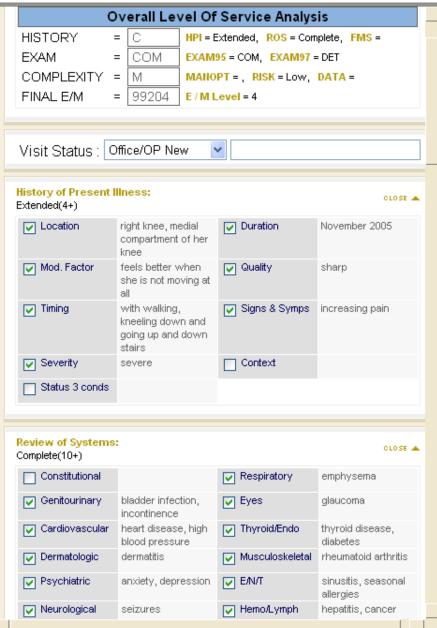
Constitutional symptoms: Negative except as documented in HPI. Respiratory symptoms: Negative except as documented in HPI. Neurologic symptoms: Negative except as documented in HPI. Additional review of systems information: All other systems reviewed and otherwise negative.

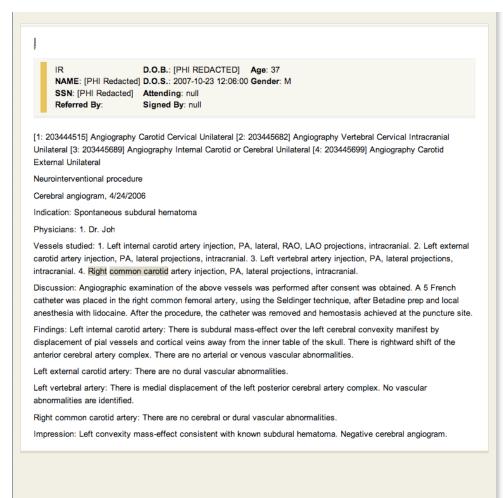
#### EXAM:

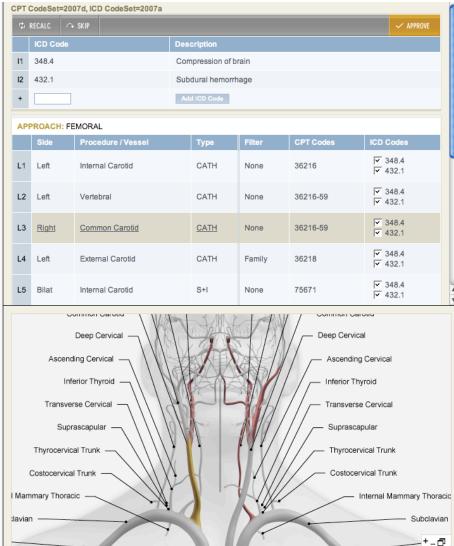
Vital Signs. Heart Rate 73 bpm Respiratory Rate 14 breaths/min SBP NIBP 101 mmHg DBP NIBP 61 mmHg SpO2 99 % General: No acute distress. Head: 5 cm laceration over top of head to sq. does not extend to galea. Neck: Supple, trachea midline, no tenderness. Neurological: Alert and oriented to person, place, time, and situation.



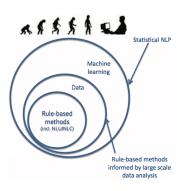








Natural language processing and machine learning







# NLP-enabled aggregate analysis

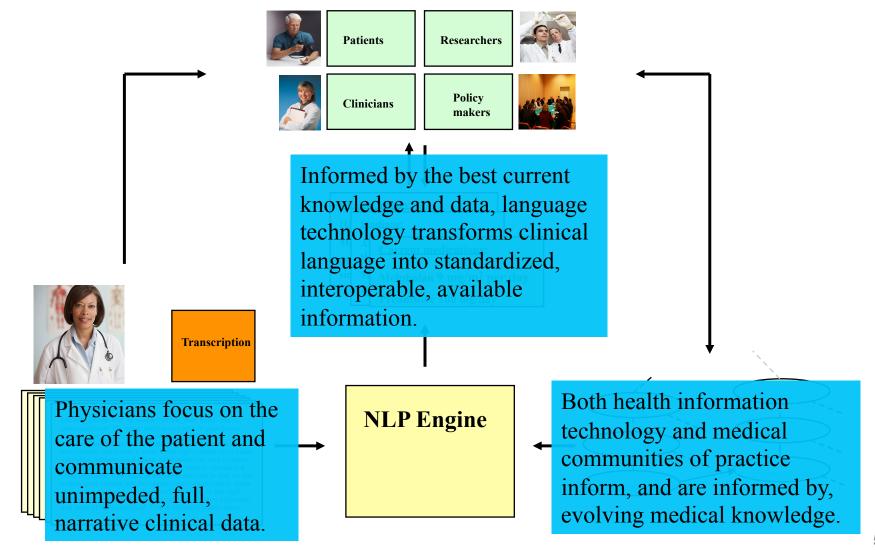
Category	Sample Measures			
(A) Patient Identification & Recruitment	Male smokers, 50 y.o.+ with history of COPD and no history of lung cancer for enrollment in a clinical trial/study			
(B) Performance & Accreditation	Patients with diabetes and their most recent HbA1C<9.0%			
(C) Acute Care Management	% of patients aged 5-40y.o. with asthma prescribed an inhaled corticosteroid			
(D) Chronic Care Management	% of patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis prescribed a DMARD			
(E) Utilization	Hospital readmission rates within 30 days after discharge			

# NLP-enabled aggregate analysis

Category	Sample Measures
(F) Complications & Patient Safety	Urinary catheter removal on post- operative day 1 or 2
(G) Provider Profiling	% of primary care MDs not prescribing Beta-Blocker Rxs for patients with left sided heart failure (LVSD)
(H) Revenue Cycle Support & Efficiency	Specialist referral rates outside of the physician group or network (i.e. leakage)
(I) Customized Applications	The number of patients with hypertension discharged from the hospital on < 2 antihypertensive Rxs

We can get where we need to go without losing the language.

# A way forward: recognizing that structured <u>datasets</u> ≠ structured <u>input</u>





Save the cheerleader, save the world



Save the narrative, save the world

Thank you.

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